

DUXBURY

Land bank proposal is eyed

By TOM BENSON
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DUXBURY — Buoyed by the popularity of the Cape Cod land bank, the conservation commission hopes to secure a spot for a similar proposal on next spring's town meeting warrant.

The specifics of the land bank have yet to be finalized, but at the selectmen's Monday meeting the commission will ask the board to reserve a spot for some kind of proposal.

"They'll make a presentation as to the various types of land banks that have passed in Massachusetts," said Conservation Agent Joseph Grady. "A spot on the warrant is up to the selectmen. It's the first of many steps that has to be taken."

"The conservation commission will carry the ball, but they'll look for input from the finance committee and (the rest of town)."

The commission also proposed a land bank in 1998. The plan made it onto the warrant but was withdrawn before the vote due to perceived public resistance to the land transfer tax that would fund the program, according to commission member Arthur Vautrain.

Now the success of the Cape Cod land bank has made open space advocates more optimistic.

Grady said the commission knows more about the possibilities this year, and that continued growth in the area makes the strategy more important than ever.

"The push seems to be to develop land on the South Shore now that the train is here," Grady said. "There's a feeling that if we don't do something now, it may be too late."

The Cape Cod program imposes a 3 percent excise tax on real estate, with the revenue going into a fund to purchase open space. The state has agreed to provide up to \$15 million in matching funds.

Each town has a committee that identifies possible land purchases, which are then voted at town meeting.

The conservation commission has not decided how the Duxbury plan would be funded. Grady said that within the next two months most of the details would be addressed, but the land bank will rely on some kind of tax or transfer fee to collect money to be used to buy land.

The concept fits with the town's overall goal to control growth and maintain its rural character, issues that are embodied in the comprehensive plan the planning board has nearly completed.

"It would fit in with the comprehensive plan," said Town Planner Thomas Broadrick. "One of the ways we are going to be able to control growth is to support the purchase of land to maintain open space. One of the ways to do that is through a land bank."

The selectmen's meeting will begin at 7:30 p.m. in the large basement meeting room at Town Hall.